



WORLD EDUCATION

***Building for Peace and Prosperity  
in the Casamance Region  
of Senegal***

**A CASE STUDY**

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While acknowledging help from so many informants, the study team retains complete responsibility for all errors of fact and interpretation that may have slipped into this paper.

Photo credits: Photos on pages 8, 9, 33 and 35 were taken by Carrol Otto. The rest are from the files of *Building for Peace and Prosperity*.

## Glossary of Terms, Abbreviations and Acronyms

l'Abbé	An abbot, clergyman in the Roman Catholic church
ACA	Association Conseil pour L'Action, project partner
AJAC	Association des Jeunes Agriculteurs de Casamance, project partner
AJAEDO	Association des Jeunes Agriculteurs et Eleveurs du Département de Oussouye, project partner
APRAN	A local NGO, assisted by the project
<i>Boutique communautaire</i>	Term used in the Casamance for a small village shop which sells basic goods like sugar, oil and salt
Casamaçais	People or person from the Casamance; also, an adjective meaning 'of the Casamance'
CCC	Collectif des Cadres Casamançais, project partner
<i>Communauté rurale</i>	Rural community, an administrative grouping of about five villages that elect a council for planning and coordination
CONGAD	Consortium des ONG d'Appui au Développement
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSO	Civil society organization, term applied to all kinds of local institutions including grassroots associations
<i>Désenclavement</i>	To bring out of isolation, for example, by providing access to an isolated area
Health hut	Village facility for basic services for health and first aid
Korase	Project partner
MFDC	Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance
Microproject	World Education term for small-scale village level projects
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OFAD	Organisation de Formation et d'Appui au Développement, project partner
Pirogue	A wooden canoe-shaped boat; some can carry 40 people
<i>Roi</i> or King	Terms used for a kind of spiritual leader in Diola culture
Sous-préfet	Government administrator at the district level
Tostan	Senegalese NGO, project partner
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WANEP	West African Network for Peace
WE	World Education

## A. Executive Summary

As the funding for its project in the Casamance of southern Senegal draws to a close, the staff of World Education felt that this project had been unusual, and perhaps unusually successful. They wanted to capture the learning from this experience in some way other than a traditional project final evaluation. The result is this case study, an appraisal and an appreciation of that unusual project.

The Casamance has suffered through a 22-year civil conflict that has seriously disrupted the lives of the millions of inhabitants. In the past few years it appears that fighting has largely ended and momentum is building toward a peace accord; however, discord within the rebel movement complicates negotiations.

Development agencies and donors are slowly returning to help the Casamançais overcome the trauma and destruction of war. When US Agency for International Development (USAID), one of the few donors that stayed active in the region, began grantmaking again, World Education responded with this proposal.

*Building for Peace and Prosperity in the Casamance* is a three-year, \$1.2 million project funded through a cooperative agreement with USAID under its special objective for the Casamance. World Education (WE), in concert with several partners, proposed a program that focuses on strengthening village associations as a way of reviving communal action and the economic and social infrastructure.

This study finds that *Building for Peace and Prosperity* is a project worth examining and learning from. Its design responds to the complexity of the peacebuilding process with a set of sequential interventions to break the silence and isolation imposed by the conflict, rebuild local capacities and confidence, and lead communities back to the kind of collaboration that once marked this society.

A thoughtful project design was matched by energetic implementation that took full advantage of opportunities to enlarge the scope of action and increase impact. By circumstance and skill, WE's project has contributed to peacebuilding at the diplomatic level, while also improving the lives of some 50,000 villagers. *This must be seen as the first phase of World Education's commitment to peacebuilding in the region. Key tasks remain unfinished on all levels.*

The case study begins with an examination of the Casamance environment and a review of the project design. What happened when the design met reality is next, followed by observations on results. The concepts of conflict transformation are then used to provide a theoretical framework for the project's peacebuilding effort. A section on lessons to be learned from the project completes the study.

Boxed vignettes of individuals, organizations and community efforts, plus captioned photos offer glimpses of project activities and the many courageous Casamançais who work daily to make peace a reality. This project is really theirs.

## B. Background and foreground in the Casamance

**Geography of colonization.** The unnatural borders bequeathed by colonialism that define northern Senegal, The Gambia, the Casamance and Guinea Bissau continue to trouble the region. Europeans first visited this westernmost part of Africa in the mid-1400s when the Portuguese built forts along the coast.



By 1700 France secured ports from St-Louis on the Senegal River southward to the north bank of the Gambia River. The British set up their first west Africa garrison on the south bank of the Gambia in the 1660s, challenging their archrivals for supremacy in slaves, gold and ivory. Eventually the British gained control of both banks of that river and proclaimed sovereignty over the country known today as the Gambia that slices into Senegal from the coast, virtually cutting off Senegal's lower region, the Casamance.

Moving south along the Atlantic coast, France still held sway down to the next great river, the Casamance. South of that, the coast was nominally part of Portuguese Guinea, later renamed Guinea Bissau. France secured the south shore of the Casamance River from Portugal in the 1880s, as Senegal took its present shape. Its economic and political capital is Dakar, a port city in the north.

The Casamance appears on the map as an elongated slice of land, sandwiched between the Gambia and Guinea Bissau. Physically separated from the rest of Senegal, except for a little-used road link to the far east of the country, the Casamance has always been a province apart. The alternating layers of different national territories stretching westward from the coast made for long and porous

borderlands. Here smugglers, freedom fighters, bandits and rebels have long operated with impunity.

**The Casamance closer up.** This is a land of many parts and peoples. Its dominant feature is the wide, deep and saline Casamance River, banked by a labyrinth of mangrove creeks and dotted with islands. The west and southern parts of the Casamance receive plentiful rainfall that supports tropical vegetation. Heading east, climate and landscape become progressively drier, and finally Sahelian in character. In between these extremes are gradations, allowing for many different patterns of human land use.

The patchwork of people and cultures includes two larger ethnic groupings and several smaller ones, each with their own variations. The Diola (pronounced jou-lah) are prominent in western Casamance. Known for their sacred forests, spiritualism, and annual cycles of rituals and festivals, most Diola remain fiercely loyal to customary beliefs and practices. Christianity and even Islam have made some in-roads, and a mixture of religious practice is common.

In eastern Casamance the major group is the Fulani (or Pulaar). These cattle raising people are mainly Muslim under the brotherhood system of Islam practiced in Senegal. Other indigenous peoples include the Mandinka and the Sérèr, among several smaller groups. All of these have cultural cousins and other family ties across the colonial borders. For example, Diola in Guinea Bissau and Pulaar speakers in all countries of the sub-region. Historic trade routes also unite the sub-region.

One other ethnic group has immigrated to the Casamance, somewhat to the consternation of some indigenous citizens. The Wolof from northern Senegal, the largest single ethnic group in the country, are increasing their presence in the Casamance. Each of these ethnicities has its own language, and many Casamançais speak several of them. French serves as the administrative language.



*La Reine or the Queen of Essaout, is a spiritual leader who has joined the peace process, promoting a spirit of forgiveness and tolerance among people who look to her for guidance. From her base in rural Oussouye she has facilitated inter-village encounters to re-open communications and cooperation disrupted by war.*

**Ziguinchor.** Before the Casamance was split into two administrative regions in 1984, Ziguinchor on the south bank was its capital city. It is still the main port for ocean-going vessels and the southern hub of the trans-Gambian highway to northern Senegal. Wide avenues, flowering trees and faded infrastructure await Ziguinchor's rare visitors. They will also appreciate the irony of a city at the center of a 22-year civil conflict, where one can walk safely anytime, day or night.

Ziguinchor and the town of Kolda to the east are headquarters for administrative regions that bear their names. 'Casamance' no longer has legal meaning. To many residents, however, the Casamance is still an integral unit. If asked, they will proudly proclaim to be Diola (or Pulaar or Mandinka) first, *Casamançais* second and *Sénégalais* third. This brings us to the area's historic attitude toward outside authority.

**The politics of resistance and resentment.** From early colonial times, the people of Casamance forcibly opposed foreign intrusion and control. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, French colonial policy was to rule through local chiefs. Since Diola culture is not hierarchical in leadership, Mandinka chiefs were installed over the Diola. They were resented as much as the French.

#### Death on the streets

Every story has its different versions. According to one common retelling of the precipitating moment in the Casamance conflict, on a Sunday in 1982, a large group of peaceful human rights demonstrators marched to the governor's offices in Ziguinchor. Someone took down the Senegalese flag and raised a white flag in its place.

Whether it was a call for justice or for independence, this deed elicited a response. Either during this march, or at a similar one some days later, the situation turned violent when greatly outnumbered government forces fired on marchers, wounding and killing many, including women and children.

People scattered and some fled to the protection of the forests. More deaths followed in uneven battles of guns against machetes. In the end, rebels accumulated weapons, and slowly formed a decentralized armed force known as the military wing of the Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance (MFDC).

The Casamance offered sporadic armed resistance to colonial rule until the 1930s, never fully accepting foreign dominion. Thus, the region was kept under military rule, perhaps viewed by the French as more in need of armed coercion than cultural seduction. The Casamance therefore did not receive as many investments and educational opportunities as the majority of northern Senegal, particularly the Dakar region, received during the colonial period. Better educated in European ways, and better positioned in Dakar, northerners took control of independent Senegal in 1960, including the contentious Casamance.

Many southerners still feel that the historic imbalance of investment and opportunity has not changed, breeding long-term grievances and bitterness. *Casamançais* bristle under perceived condescension by northerners, or any inference that their region is backward and belligerent, unworthy of modernization efforts or integration into the mainstream of national life.

To the degree that northerners do harbor bias against Casamançais, some of it may come from distinct physical and cultural differences. Lush and fertile with areas of dense forests, western Casamance stands in stark geographic contrast to the monotonous plains of the arid and sandy Sahel of the north. Meanwhile, rich cultural practices and strongly defended animist beliefs are so different from the Muslim faith dominant in the north, and may appear archaic to outsiders.

### Foreground of the Casamance rebellion

Le Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance (MFDC) was started in 1947 as a voice for the region in the post-WW II era, as Africans began to envision the end of colonial rule. After independence in 1960, tensions grew between the Dakar government and Casamance groups that demanded more investment and autonomy for their region such as MFDC.

In 1982 a supposedly peaceful protest march turned violent, dramatically changing the future of the region (box above). In the long years since then, the Casamance has been devastated by the armed conflict between rebels and government forces. Thousands of men volunteered or were forced into fighting for the rebels or for the government.

Concomitant with this bloodshed and instability, many essential services disappeared or were greatly curtailed. Schools, health facilities, agricultural extension services, farmer training centers, and rural credit schemes were closed or operated at a fraction of their former capacities. Wells were poisoned leaving villages without a water supply. Local shops and suppliers of basic goods ceased operations, as their stocks attracted rebels and bandits. Almost every social and economic aspect of normal life was disrupted in parts of the Casamance countryside.

#### When elephants fight ....

There is an African saying: *When elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers most.*

The glorious MFDC struggle for freedom from Senegal had a certain level of popular support in the early years. Hundreds of men and older boys slipped away from their families to join militia units in the forests. Some whole villages were known to be pro-MFDC, just as others took the opposite position. At first, rebels could count on certain villages for food and temporary shelter. As the conflict wore on, public support waned, and rebels needed to commandeer supplies.

MFDC's struggle also became a cover for banditry and drug smuggling. MFDC rebels increasingly turned to robbery, stealing from shops and terrorizing households for food. Villagers were forced to flee as combatants burned houses and destroyed crops. Rape and murder became common in the 1990s, with Senegalese military contributing to the atrocities and chaos in its attempt to root out sympathizers. Overland transport in some areas is impossible as bridges and other installations were blown up, and roads were rendered unusable by landmines.

An estimated 60,000 Casamançais were internally displaced. 13,000 more sought refuge in neighboring countries. As many as 230 communities have been abandoned, mainly along the borders with the Gambia and Guinea Bissau. 650 people are known to have been killed or maimed by landmines.

There are no statistics on the total number who have died in the conflict, but the *grass* of the Casamance has paid dearly for the struggle between the warring elephants.

**A spell on the land.** The people of Casamance fell into an economic, social and attitudinal depression. For the Diola especially, with their rich associative life

suppressed, communal life changed dramatically. Fear and suspiciousness kept spiritual leaders from their duties and vacated posts were not filled. Management of irrigation water and crop cultivation, usually the responsibility of associations, fell into disputes and bickering. Traditional rituals, a time-honored mechanism for improving communication and community relationships were neglected. Village and inter-village management regimes for conflict resolution and cooperation and the accompanying reverence for cultural leaders were replaced by mistrust, inaction and helplessness.

Other cultural events such as dancing, wrestling, story-telling and theater fell into disuse. Compared to life as they had known it, the people of Casamance were living in chaos. Ethnic groups that had co-existed peacefully for generations were now in conflict. Communities were pitted against each other, family against family and brother against brother. Blood oaths were sworn for revenge.

Secret denunciations lead to torture, disappearances, and years of imprisonment without benefit of legal council. Neighbors feared to discuss news. Meetings, even among family members, became suspect or feared as either warring side might assume a conspiracy against its cause. Survivors of rape and torture and other victims of trauma were left in solitary pain and humiliation. A great silence fell upon the land.

#### René's story, part I: Denunciation

In the mid 1990s, he felt lucky to have a steady job near his home town of Kabrousse, so he worked hard to maintain a flawless lawn at the Club Med. René knew all the men from his neighborhood who had left to join the MFDC, but had no sympathy for their separatist cause. He was a strong and vocal supporter of the national opposition party, (which is now in power), and often spoke out about the failings of the government.

On 6 October 1995 military men came to the Club and took him for questioning. Just routine, they said. René found himself imprisoned in Ziguinchor. Later a judge came to the jail and grilled René. Yes, he knew the names of alleged MFDC recruits from his area -- everyone knows them. No, he had no further contact with them. No, he did not send them money. Yes, he had been critical of the government, but only in the usual way in a democracy. The judge left.

There would be no trial, not even a real accusation and no chance to defend himself. René was in 'protective custody'. There were many men like René in the prison, serving an indeterminate term for an unknown crime. What they had in common was that someone had denounced them – secretly accused them of complicity with MFDC. No evidence was required, and a small reward given to the anonymous tipsters.

3 December 1999, four years and two months later, René was released as abruptly as he had been arrested. He returned to the Club Med to get his job back, but it was filled and they did not plan to hire any new lawn care workers.  
(René's story continues below)

### **Stalemate**

MFDC's hit-and-run tactics of ambushes and raids harassed Senegal military units and terrorized villages that would not support the rebels with recruits and supplies. Although the MFDC rebels were never strong enough to hold territory for long, they could retreat into the forests, cross neighboring borders, and elude their enemy. The military chased and fought the rebels, captured and

interrogated civilians, and finally hunkered down in their bunkers, unable to root out the MFDC guerillas completely.

Prison terms and torture hardened the positions of MFDC's non-combatant political leaders. MFDC had earlier fought for better integration into Senegal, but now it demanded independence. Meanwhile, scattered MFDC military units operated in isolation from their political wing and the outside world. All involved seem to have settled down for a long-term conflict, caught between outright war and real peace, with no coherent strategy to end the stalemate. Years passed, and the rest of the world turned its attention to other disasters.

**Le Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance (MFDC)**

From the start of armed conflict in the early 1980s, the rebels fought under the banner of MFDC. In reality, MFDC is more a concept than a unified organization, and there are different versions of what that concept should be. For hardcore militants, MFDC is freedom fighters, battling for the independence of their home land. For others, MFDC is a political movement, struggling to right historic wrongs in the treatment of Casamance.

One division within the ranks of MFDC is geographic: the northern front operates in the east-west borderland with the Gambia, while the southern front works the borderland with Guinea Bissau. The military units have little contact with each other and operate without any central command structure or common plan of action.

Another fault line within MFDC runs between the military and the political wings of the movement. Led by MFDC's President l'Abbé Augustin Diamacoune, and his brother Bertrand, a Ziguinchor-based unit of MFDC is the public face of the movement. It is the faction that appears most willing to negotiate a peace agreement without the demand for Casamance independence .

A competing political faction is based in Bignona Department in northern Casamance, although its force has diminished with the recent death of its doyen, Sidy Badji. Yet another political MFDC faction operates in exile in France. All use the platform of mass media to proclaim their positions and vie for power.

**Peace at last?**

For years peace efforts have come and gone, leaving little more than broken agreements. The government insisted that the Casamance conflict is an internal matter, accepting no offers of formal outside mediation, yet doing nothing effective to end the conflict.

Towards the year 2000, an unmistakable momentum started to build for peace. One more cease-fire accord was negotiated between the government and MFDC, and this one seems to be holding. The fatigue of war, the impossibility of a military solution and an election that changed administrations in Dakar all fueled the growing sense of a sea change in the direction of resolving the conflict.

Other factors added to the feeling of progress. Neighboring countries made positive contributions by hosting encounters on neutral ground, and indicated their unwillingness to go on harboring MFDC rebels. Popular mobilization put thousands into the streets, marching to demand an end to

hostilities. Some MFDC leaders softened their demands and spoke of autonomy within a united Senegal. 2400 soldiers were pulled out of the Casamance.

Other small signs of impending peace were noted. Development activities were picking up, as international agencies contemplated joining the corps of hardy local associations and NGOs who struggled for peace and reconciliation. USAID,

one of the few donors who had not completely left during the conflict, began to fund new projects in reconstruction. *Building for Peace and Prosperity* was one of these.

#### The sinking of the *Joola*: One tragedy too many

At the end of the school holidays in September of 2002, the state-run ferry, the *Joola*, traveling from Ziguinchor to Dakar capsized, killing more than one thousand of Casamance's best and brightest secondary school and university students. Other passengers included women taking mangoes and palm oil to the Dakar market. Many Casamançais lost entire families. A grieving population, already weary of the devastating effects of protracted armed conflict, talked of a lost generation.

A tropical storm, poor maintenance, overloading and woefully late rescue efforts were all blamed for the loss of so many lives. Among the Diola, spiritual leaders believed there were forewarnings of the accident and that it resulted from the neglect of traditional practices and rituals. The ferry provided the main link from the Casamance to northern Senegal, preferred by many to the overland route through the Gambia, which is problematic due to bandits, potholes and landmines, and increased fees for crossing the Gambia River.

President Wade, on behalf of the Senegal government, assumed full responsibility for the accident. This did little to comfort bereft families or to dissipate long-standing bitterness toward the north. Despite government promises, the *Joola* has not been replaced, furthering the social and economic isolation of the Casamance.

This disaster, the worst in Senegal's modern history, galvanized people's desire for peace. More than ever, they wanted a return to normalcy. More than ever, they raised their voices in support of the peace process and an end to the civil conflict.



*L'Abbé Augustin Diamacoune (right), the President and long-term leader of MFDC, was imprisoned for five years for his activism. He and the World Education Program Director Abdou Sarr often confer in l'Abbé's modest living quarters in a church building, which is guarded by the Senegalese military.*

As of mid-2004, the peace process is still a work in progress, with no final accords signed. Among the major remaining obstacles is the lack of unity within MFDC, as fighting factions and political spokesmen compete for control and for their different agendas.

For rebel fighters, laying down arms without achieving independence is a bitter pill not all are yet willing to swallow.

Returning to civilian life will not be easy, and some rebel leaders demand more than just amnesty. They want assurances of jobs and funds to rebuild their lives.

None of the parties wants to be perceived as capitulating, so the terms and format of negotiations remain delicate.

## C. What were they thinking? The project design

When USAID Senegal let it be known in early 2001 that it would consider proposals for work in the Casamance, World Education (WE) sent a team to Senegal to investigate the situation and to design a project. The team consisted of a Senegalese, Abdou Sarr, then working on a WE project in Guinea, and an American WE consultant with years of experience in west Africa, Dan Devine.

Both of them came to this task with an in-depth knowledge of the Casamance and a commitment to WE's program approach of strengthening and partnering with national institutions. The complexities of the situation called for a complex set of interrelated interventions to address interlocking constraints. Here is what they came up with for a design, as expressed in WE's proposal to USAID.



*These are some of the leaders of the village management committee of Salikégné in Kolda region who were elected by the village to take responsibility for the new grain grinding mill co-funded by the WE project. Meetings like this became too risky during the conflict, as either side might imagine conspiracies. Thus the once-powerful associative life of the Casamance went into decline for many years.*

### **Problem analysis.**

The WE proposal speaks of the costs of the war years, with an emphasis on the “economic and attitudinal depression of the population”.

It describes the decreased credibility of authority, be it government, rebel or traditional. It underlines the virtual disappearance of cultural and self-help associations that were once such a vital foundation for the organization of society and self-governance.

In identifying these issues, the project designers saw the need to focus on the “redynamization of the social, cultural and economic life of the Casamance where associative life has been stymied.”

## Goal, objective and themes

**Goal.** The project goal is stated in ways that reflect the priorities and program framework of the intended financial sponsor. Quoting from the proposal:

In support of the USAID/Senegal Special Objective for “Improved conditions for Economic and Political Development in the Casamance,” World Education and its partners will work to build peace and prosperity in the Casamance by contributing to peaceful co-existence, self-sufficiency and improved standards of living among the Casamance population.

**Objective.** To achieve this goal, WE proposed to put in place structures, mechanisms and techniques for conflict resolution and long term collaboration in mitigating the causes of conflict; to revitalize the associative life necessary for pro-active local development; and to contribute to economic progress and provision of social services.

**Themes.** A central theme of this project is embedded in its title, *Building for Peace and Prosperity in the Casamance*. The design emphasizes building trust in the peace process, facilitating reconciliation and strengthening local governance structures. Yet, it couples this with an investment in rebuilding war-torn community infrastructure. The proposal lays out the hypothesis that peace and reconciliation cannot proceed without improved economic security and social services. In other words, *peacebuilding requires prosperity building*.

A second theme of the design is the centrality of *la vie associative*, the associative life, in which community social and economic life is organized through village level associations, producer groups, and other self-defined entities. Such rural groupings are common across west Africa. At times they are organized into localized federations. In this project design they are seen as the building blocks for reinvigorating community participation and governance, and they serve as the pole around which to organize grassroots activities.

**Key design elements.** The design of *Building for Peace and Prosperity* may be described as five basic elements:

- a partnership with complementary national organizations that would
- work to break the silence and isolation in the Casamance,
- reinforce local institutional competence, and then
- respond to communities’ expressed needs through
- management of a series of subgrants

Let’s consider these key design elements separately, starting with partnerships.

**Partnerships.** WE's proposal calls for partnerships on several levels, starting with two national level NGOs, who will provide services:

- Tostan, an education-focused NGO, will deliver its human rights training in participating communities.
- ACA, l'Association Conseil pour l'Action, a management consulting NGO, will assist with institutional strengthening of some local associations (box below).

**ACA -- building peace by building capacity**

The Dakar-based NGO l'Association Conseil pour l'Action (ACA) was created 15 years ago to support African organizations through training and management consulting. Its expertise in small business and organizational issues is mainly aimed at cooperatives, community associations, local NGOs and micro-enterprises. For the difficult task of strengthening WE's intermediary partners for *Building for Peace and Prosperity*, ACA has all the right moves.

In an era when few outside agencies worked in the Casamance, these local associations had struggled into existence with little or no external aid, often lacking basic office equipment. They each had a wide rural membership, inexperienced volunteer leadership and an agenda to change the lives of poor people. By the time ACA's intervention was completed, these agencies knew where they were going and how they would get there.

For each of the localized associations, AJAC, AJAEDO, OFAD (and a fourth, Korase, added later), management experts from ACA carried out a participatory institutional assessment, agreed on a program to address major issues, and then delivered a series of training and monitoring activities to make the planned improvements.

Although the specifics varied, each association needed an overhaul in its governance and personnel systems, and a lot of training and mentoring for organizational strengthening. After all that, there was a lot of on-the-job learning still to come, but ACA had prepared these agencies to pass on skills to grassroots groups, and assist WE in managing its community-based program.

Another level of partnerships concerns local associations who will partner in this program in two ways. They will undergo institutional strengthening, so as to better serve the needs of their rural constituencies. Then, they will help WE work in the communities of their different catchment areas. They are:

- AJAC, l'Association des Jeunes Agriculteurs de Casamance, a regional federation of grassroots associations. This young farmers association has village sectoral units, with programs in the regions of Ziguinchor and Kolda.
- OFAD, l'Organisation de Formation et d'Appui au Développement, a membership association for training and development based in rural Kolda in eastern Casamance, and serving 100 communities (box below).
- AJAEDO, l'Association des Jeunes Agriculteurs et Eleveurs du Département de Oussouye, a grouping of young farmers and herders that promotes economic activities for women and men.

**Breaking the silence and isolation.** The project designers realized that the population had to first break out of its collective depression before it could begin to imagine returning to normalcy. Taking advantage of the rich cultural heritage of the region, the project proposed to create cultural events within the project zone to bring large numbers of citizens together, and then open up public forums on peacebuilding and development action. This will be followed by a process of community-level training in human rights.

#### OFAD --- grown from its own grassroots

32 kilometers east of Kolda in the small town of Bagadadji is the headquarters of l'Organisation de Formation et d'Appui au Développement, OFAD, one of WE's local intermediary partners. OFAD owes its 30 years of steady growth to its executive secretary, Baba Koita. Working as an accountant in Kolda, Koita went home on weekends to start a youth group. Other villages joined. When the groups became an NGO in the 1990s, there were 6000 members in 100 groups.

OFAD's mission is social transformation in the struggle against poverty, injustice and for a return to lasting peace. Its programs include services to local communities in literacy, health, education, microfinance and peace.

Although this area did not contribute recruits to the MFDC, the border villages near Guinea Bissau saw many battles. Thousands were displaced. In some rural areas government services like health and education came to a standstill. Economic life was also seriously disrupted.

ACA's organizational diagnosis opened Koita's eyes to the need to let others share in decision making. OFAD restructured itself and moved forward with middle managers and new energy. It has been one of WE's busiest partners, supervising 63 microprojects and later taking on the additional task of human rights training.

Koita notes that WE never imposed its ideas or refused to consider his own, in a true partnership of mutual benefit. Now other international agencies are using OFAD's capacities to deliver services to rural communities.

**Building local capacities.** WE's project plan was to have ACA diagnose and address institutional weaknesses in the intermediary partners AJAC, AJAEDO and OFAD. Also, the WE project has two Project Officers/Trainers whose job description includes training NGO partners and their field trainers.

Thus AJAC, OFAD and AJAEDO will be trained so they can reinforce the project personnel's outreach into the communities in their respective service areas.

In each participating community, citizens will elect a *village management committee* that will take responsibility for development activities.

Members of these village management committees will be trained to manage and supervise projects and to contribute to peaceful resolution of conflicts in their communities.

**Responding to community needs.** Small grants from the project to participating communities are intended to support a tangible service or infrastructure improvement of the communities' choosing. In most cases, an existing civil society organization (CSO) within the villages is then selected by the village to oversee these efforts, or *microprojects*, on behalf of the entire community. The leaders of that CSO are trained in the basics of project management, bookkeeping and technical skills as needed.

**Subgrant management.** The mechanism to bring resources to project partners and communities is subgrants from WE. The project will negotiate and sign subgrant agreements for services with ACA and Tostan. The second kind of subgrant is to AJAK, AJAEDO and OFAD for their participation in project activities. Subgrants for up to 150 microprojects is a third kind of subgrant, as part of the process of association building and community mobilization.

### **Program approach of *Building for Peace and Prosperity***

The overall strategy in this program sequence is to present a beleaguered citizenry with measured, practical steps of building confidence, learning skills and taking action to bring themselves out of a long dark period of fear and isolation, and back into the associative life that was so strong in their pre-conflict society. In the process, the people will make choices, share responsibilities, take some risks, and redevelop the social networks of communal governance.

How these and other design elements were meant to come together is sequenced below. These steps show the actions that pertain directly to the main beneficiaries in participating communities.

- **Cultural Weekends.** The first step is to help the people overcome the mistrust and general retreat from public life that had descended on the land. This was done by two-day public festivals with traditional music, singing, dance, theater, wrestling contests, and customary rituals to break the silence, promote the peace process, and create an atmosphere of positive change. Cultural Weekends are also meant as occasions to initiate a public discussion of what must be done to re-establish a secure and productive environment.



*Dr. Pereira of UNICEF supervises a new presenter in a training-of-trainers session on the management of stress reactions. This was added to the village-level training offered by the World Education project when trauma was identified as an issue for people in the aftermath of the conflict.*

### **Human rights training.**

The participatory process developed by Tostan encourages participants to articulate their rights and needs for a durable peace at the community level, and then plan practical steps for securing their vision. The program fosters responsibilities for rights and taking action to attain them.

In a community-wide meeting, three commissions are established: one each for the rights of the person, of the child and of the woman. They are each charged to develop an action plan, which could include elements like training in negotiation and work on reconciliation.

- **Community planning process.** By this point in the process, participating communities have hopefully begun to feel more secure and confident in their abilities to influence the course of events, and are ready to consider their priorities for the future. Under their village management committees they come together to select a social or economic project, decide who will manage it, and mobilize their own resources to participate in this effort.
- **Community microprojects.** The microproject is then entrusted to a CSO to manage. The CSO reports regularly to the entire community, which is informed of all financial decisions. WE closely monitors the microproject operation to ensure that a high degree of transparency and accountability are maintained. This small grant in the range of \$1000 is seed money, meant to rebuild needed communal resources, while also rebuilding habits of collaborative action and local self-governance.
- **Evaluation and multi-year planning.** Building on the success of the community microproject, a self-evaluation is conducted. This evaluation process leads to longer-term planning for community reconstruction, including generation of resources to meet an expanded agenda of actions.

**Project management.** The original project management scheme called for a Program Director overseeing two senior staff: a Training Coordinator and a Director of Administration and Finance.

Based in Ziguinchor, these three people would also manage some junior staff, the participation of the partner organizations and occasional short-term technical consultants.

Working under the Training Coordinator are two Project Officers/Trainers. The Director of Administration and Finance, assisted by an Accounting/Grants Manager, would also supervise other support staff such as secretaries and drivers.

**Abdou Sarr – manager, diplomat and development practitioner**

Born in Thiès in the northern part of Senegal, Abdou studied in Dakar and France. He worked for ten years in the Ministries of Rural Development and of Social Development, including a stint as director of a farmer training center in the Casamance.

He then moved to the non-governmental sector, serving a dozen years with OXFAM in Senegal and around West Africa, which gave him exposure to many grassroots associations and their networks, from creating rural radio stations to piloting programs on HIV/AIDS.

For the past five years he has worked with World Education, first in Guinea and now in Senegal in the dual roles as Program Director for *Building for Peace and Prosperity* and as WE Country Director.

Abdou has captured some of his passion and accumulated wisdom on civil society organizations in a new book entitled: *le Mouvement Associatif du Milieu Rural en Afrique Subsaharienne: les Péripéties d'une Révolution Tranquille*, or, *The Associative Movement in Rural Sub-Saharan Africa: Vicissitudes of a Quiet Revolution*.

### Geographic target zones.

In the final May 2001 version of the project proposal to USAID the project zone is in the departments of Ziguinchor, Oussouye and Sédhiou (west) in Ziguinchor Region and in Kolda Department in Kolda Region.

This zone of intervention is in southern Casamance, mainly between the Casamance River and the Guinea-Bissau border. WE's initial proposal included the northern Casamance department of Bignona in Ziguinchor Region. At USAID's request, Bignona Department was replaced by Kolda Department to the southeast. Also added for the final version was Oussouye Department in the southwest, an area of heavy rebel activity in years past and an important center of Diola culture.

Bearing in mind the two MFDC 'fronts' operating along border areas of the Gambia and Guinea Bissau, respectively, and the north-south factional split within the MFDC, Bignona's inclusion would have produced a balance of a north-south distribution of project activities.

During the three-year implementation of this project, WE tried in vain to secure supplemental funding to include Bignona Department. However, the project remained largely limited to its original zone of operation, mainly confined to the south side of the Casamance River, except for work in parts of Sédhiou (west) just north of the river.



## D. Design meets reality: Changes during implementation

**True to form.** For the most part, the WE project management team implemented *Building for Peace and Prosperity* as envisioned in the proposal. Nonetheless, it is instructive to see how the design changed during implementation. Some differences were fortuitous – opportunities that presented themselves and were grasped to enhance effectiveness or impact. Some changes resulted from personal interactions and human chemistry, or its absence. Some were needed to correct for erroneous assumptions made during planning. Whatever the provenance of these changes, here is what happened when design met reality.

**Partnerships** played their intended central role in project implementation, with these changes:

- Funding to Tostan for human rights training was not renewed after one year, due to differing priorities and communications difficulties. That work was taken over by OFAD, whose personnel Tostan had trained earlier.
- UNICEF was added as a service provider for stress management training.
- A fourth intermediary partner was added, the local association Korase, extending the reach of the project in the far east of Kolda region.
- The role of the intermediary partners grew beyond what was intended, as their new skills and capacities allowed them to carry out more mentoring and monitoring of community organizations and their microprojects.
- A new level of partnership developed for a new kind of activity that was never imagined in the project design: peace negotiations at the highest level. The major new partner in this activity was the Collectif des Cadres Casamançais.

**Breaking the silence and isolation** became even more prominent than indicated in the proposal, as the Cultural Weekends took on greater political significance.

*Building for Peace and Prosperity* negotiated for senior leaders of the MFDC and the government to share the speakers' platform and confirm their common cause.

### Collectif des Cadres Casamançais -- partner in peacebuilding

As *Building for Peace and Prosperity* took an active role in assisting MFDC, Program Director Abdou Sarr realized that an informal conduit to pass messages directly and quickly to the President's office in Dakar would be invaluable. Sarr approached his old mentor and former government Minister, Ben Mady Cissé, to play this role. Cissé agreed to help, but only in the framework of the Collectif des Cadres Casamançais (CCC).

CCC is a group of Casamançais professionals who lend their support for peace and development in their home region. With Cissé's recommendation, CCC agreed to work with WE to advance the peace process, in particular to lay the groundwork for face-to-face meetings between the top leaders.

Both sides worked on multiple drafts of documents, and prepared both parties for this fateful encounter in May 2003. CCC Secretary General, George Lopez, anchored the effort in Dakar, while Abdou Sarr did the same in Ziguinchor.

Sadly, Cissé died during the peace process; but he lived to hear news of the historic meeting. The CCC-WE partnership now goes well beyond a single friendship; however, its origins illustrate how personal relationships facilitate peacebuilding.

The tension was palpable, and blunt opinions were exchanged. Yet both sides showed mutual respect, demonstrating that the peace process was real.

This was a monumental event. In two decades of conflict, never had MFDC been given such public forums to explain its position, and to declare its commitment to ending the conflict. Citizens turned out by the thousands at each



*The Cultural Weekends and other smaller public forums sponsored by the WE project were widely attended events. Solemn pronouncements and prayers were followed by cultural observations and sometimes sporting events. Time was set aside for leaders and citizens to meet to talk of what practical steps were needed to move towards lasting peace and revitalizing community life. It did not happen in one meeting, but over time the silence was broken.*

of the weekend gatherings to see and hear for themselves. The Cultural Weekends put a human face on MFDC for those who only knew its shadowy violent side. In the process, these events gave MFDC leaders reason to trust World Education as a neutral presence and source of further collaboration.

**Building local capacities.** In this aspect of project design, two changes are noteworthy. For one, USAID added the responsibility of improving the capacities of the local NGO APRAN, so that it could better manage and report on donor funds.

A more significant unanticipated task was added by the WE project team: provision of technical assistance to the leaders of MFDC. The rebel movement, with its competing public factions and armed units is far from a functional organization. Its leaders' self image is that of freedom fighters, not managers or diplomats. Yet, the peace process requires quick responses, coordination and a high level of diplomacy from MFDC, with well-reasoned presentations, tactful negotiations, and cohesion.

Based on the positive experiences of the Cultural Weekends, MFDC leaders approached WE's Program Director Abdou Sarr for support in the complex peace process. He and his team assessed the risks and accepted the request, thereby adding a major new component to an already complex program. From drafting

speeches and preparation of position papers, to accompanying MFDC leaders on crucial encounters with the government, Abdou Sarr provided discrete assistance. He helped MFDC leaders articulate a more moderate stance, while continuing to demand fairer treatment for the Casamance.



*Taken at the Kabrousse 'Tournament of Peace' football match, this photo captures the public display of unity among former enemies, as Bertrand Daimacoune (center) of MFDC stands next to a military commander. The King of Kabrousse, a spiritual leader is in red. WE's Abdou Sarr is on Bertrand's right. Local officials complete the picture. Such WE project events reinforced popular confidence in the peace process.*

The project also provided logistical and facilitation support for internal MFDC encounters, such as the 2002 reconciliation meetings between Abbé Augustin Daimacoune and the head of the northern faction, Sidy Badji. The project staff also played a key role in organizing public forums with MFDC in the

peace process. One example is the historic encounter of 5000 regional leaders called the *Assise Casamanço Casamançais* in October 2003, which allowed different elements of the Casamance to express their demands and aspirations for MFDC's negotiations with Dakar. WE handled the logistics for the event.

**Responding to community needs and subgrants management.** Considering these two design elements together, the mechanism of carefully targeted grants for community-defined needs was used to good effect in the project. Two major changes can be noted. First of all, the microproject budget was doubled to \$300,000, because the actual average grant size, about \$2000, was much larger than estimated in the proposal and also these grants were in high demand.

Secondly, in addition to the envisioned community infrastructure grants, WE's project managers used these microprojects to provide flexible, punctual assistance to a range of innovative activities in peacebuilding. With some grants under \$500, the project supported ventures such as the 'tournament of peace' football match (box above) to bring youth together from feuding communities, and rituals by Diola spiritual leaders for cleansing of returning rebels and for collective forgiveness by all who were wronged during the conflict.

### **Venturing into high-level formal diplomacy**

Unusual circumstances led WE project managers to involvement in diplomatic activities that have influenced the peace process in the Casamance. As a framework for this, let's consider that peacebuilding occurs at different levels, each requiring different approaches by different actors. Experts in this field separate social, structural and political peacebuilding, summarized as follows.

**Social peacebuilding** focuses on relationships and the human infrastructure needed for individual and communal recovery from the psycho-social aspects of conflicts. The frayed fabric of society is rewoven through dialogue, training and community-building activities.

Grassroots leadership is needed from community elders, and local leaders of cultural and social entities.

**Structural peacebuilding** is a second track that concerns rebuilding social and economic infrastructure that supports a return to peaceful development.

At this middle level, leadership is supplied by religious, ethnic, intellectual and humanitarian leaders including NGOs, for activities like refugee return, demining and rebuilding physical infrastructure.



*Sporting events now include both boys and girls, as this photo illustrates. Forming teams and holding tournaments are powerful symbols of a return to normalcy and collective action, both on and off the pitch.*

**Political peacebuilding**, or what is sometimes referred to as *track one diplomacy*, deals with the over-all context of conflict, and focuses on the legal infrastructure of agreements, such as a cease-fire. This level involves top military, political and perhaps religious leadership.

The most significant deviation from the original design of *Building for Peace and Prosperity* was its move into track one diplomacy. No doubt, the involvement at this level of project personnel of an external NGO like World Education is most unusual. WE staff neither planned for this at the project onset, nor maneuvered itself into this role. However, when called upon by one party, MFDC, it accepted the challenge and has acted with considerable skill and apparent success.

Clearly, *Building for Peace and Prosperity* was designed for direct involvement in both social and structural peacebuilding. When political peacebuilding was added, it created a uniquely integrated model.

## **E. From *what* to *so what*: Project results and impact**

The previous two sections presented what was meant to happen and actually happened during implementation of this project. Now we need to ask: so what? What difference has the project made in the lives of Casamançais as they struggle to recover from two decades of conflict? Did *Building for Peace and Prosperity* reach its objective? The response to these questions is organized around the three types of peacebuilding: social, structural and political. But first, a methodological note.

### **Causality and sources**

This project was implemented in a period of renewed activity in the Casamance. Many factors contributed to positive changes, such as the work of NGOs other than World Education and its project partners, and the investments of grantmakers other than USAID. Although *Building for Peace and Prosperity* was the leader or innovator in some activities, and the sole actor in others, its successes are shared successes.

Observations reported here were collected from community gatherings, semi-structured interviews, chance encounters and simply watching. One cannot pronounce quantitative findings with statistical certainty from such anecdotal information. On the other hand, consider the sources. If a resident development worker declares that this project has done more for peace in his area in two years than anyone else has done in the last 20, that statement has a certain credibility.

There is also credibility in the handwritten accounts of a busy village shop, the shrewd reflections of traditional healers and MFDC leaders, or the testimony of the women who manage their island's only public transport. These were a few of the available sources, and here are a few of the conclusions they offer.

### **Results of social peacebuilding**

The key objective of this project is to build structures and mechanisms for conflict resolution, and revitalize associative life in communities.

By the numbers, about 220 communities were reached through Cultural Weekends, giving many thousands of participants not only the opportunity to hear political leaders, but also to voice their own grievances, concerns and appeals for peace.

Over 200 communities were assisted in their community planning process, establishing village management committees, and developing action plans. Some 150 communities participated in training on human rights and stress management.



*The Ayi of Oussouye*

*The head spiritual leader in the Oussouye area is the Ayi. The Ayi of Oussouye (pronounced eye-EE of oh-SWEE) is referred to in French as Roi, or King. He has no authority to command people but is responsible for maintaining balance and harmony within the community, which he does by the persuasive powers of his office and his personality.*

*The throne was empty for 16 years after the last Ayi died in 1984, because the royal clan feared to name a successor while the rebellion raged around Oussouye. In 2000 as signs of peace increased, the current Ayi was chosen. He has worked hard to reinvigorate observances of neglected practices in the annual cycle of Diola socio-religious ceremonies, and to bring people together.*

*The WE project has supported the Ayi of Oussouye by his inclusion in public forums like the Cultural Weekend and by funding his own peace work. The Ayi has asked rebels to return and to undergo the rites of forgiveness. Slowly, they are doing so.*

*Rebels and any others who have transgressed against neighbors during the conflict come to his sacred forest to repent and seek forgiveness. Cattle are slaughtered and shared, along with libations and other rituals that ensure that believers will accept the supplicants back into society. Once this is done, all will consider their debts paid.*

**Risking public service.** From testimony in community after community, people have begun to deal forthrightly with the legacy of distrust and isolation. Village management committees and CSOs talk with obvious pride of the physical progress of plans and projects. In the process, they also give proof of their readiness to again take risks for a common purpose. CSOs who manage community microprojects show their financial books to everyone, and report their activities to the community with impressive transparency.

Mental health issues in the aftermath of conflict are now in the open. Thanks to stress training and training-of-trainers, the stress responses to trauma are no dark secret, and helping neighbors cope is seen as a shared responsibility. Village management committees are prepared not only to run effective meetings, but also to use non-violent methods of conflict resolution.

**Healing and spiritual inclusively.** Project-supported efforts towards healing and forgiveness by shamans and imams in their public and private manifestations have helped feuding factions to make peace. They are also allowing militants to return home and injured parties to forgive. No one thinks that process is complete. Most would agree that it is well underway.

One of the most frequently heard observations about this project in the Casamance is that it included all types of spiritual leaders. This inclusion validates the influence of these players in the peacebuilding process and brings them into central roles. Ceremonies, sacrifices, processions and prayers in public places, sacred forests, mosques and churches all endorse the call for forgiveness, reconciliation and renewal.

Casamançais are a spiritual people, who seem quite tolerant of each other's different expressions of faith. The placing of spiritual leaders, alongside military, political, administrative and civil society leaders, was a potent image. By embracing the contributions of spiritual leaders in healing the wounds of war, *Building for Peace and Prosperity* tapped a powerful force in society. In valuing spiritual leaders' participation in the region's emergence from conflict, it also reinforced their role in maintaining a durable peace.

**Women as leaders.** The improved status of women is one of the project's obvious community-level impacts. Most of the CSOs to which management of community microprojects were confided are women's groups, a collective recognition of the dedication and honesty of women as managers and providers for the common good. These women now control some of the most valuable community assets, and are in the forefront of plans for follow-on development. Less easy to verify are the claims that the human rights training and resulting village commissions of rights of women and children have improved treatment of women within households.



*Pirogues for peace*

*The miles-wide mouth of the majestic Casamance River is lined with dozens of islands, many of which are inhabited. Subsistence agriculture and fishing are the mainstay of these hardy and isolated communities. The islands' inhabitants took advantage of the Cultural Weekends to plead their case for solutions to the dire lack of transport that prevents them from marketing fish and produce, and from evacuating seriously ill people, such as women with complicated births.*

*Ten island communities selected motorized pirogues for their microprojects, raised their part of the costs, and chose local community managers (usually a women's group) to oversee the new transport service. In the historic riverside town of Carabane, for example, a group of women manage the village's new boat. The women have \$846 in their account for repairs and replacements. Except for medical evacuees, passengers pay for transport. At a cost of about \$7,000 each, the motorized pirogues were the most costly microprojects, and a powerful symbol of WE's commitment to responding to communities' expressed needs. Shown above at the formal launching ceremony the entire fleet was brought together, including one boat named for the project's implementing agency, World Education.*

## **Results of structural peacebuilding**

World Education case study of *Building for Peace and Prosperity in the Casamance*

One element of the project objective is to contribute to economic progress and the provision of social services. This aim confirms the link between peacebuilding and prosperity building on a practical level.

**Economic activities and social services.** The most tangible evidence of the project's impact lies in the community microprojects that earn income, lighten women's workload, bring basic health care and improve the quality of life. The most impressive aspect of these successful ventures is that they are run by and for the communities themselves. By the numbers, microprojects of *Building for Peace and Prosperity* has provided support for the launching or improvement of 33 health huts, 23 vegetable gardens, ten grain grinding mills, four rice de-hullers, eleven village shops and ten transport boats for island communities.

The list goes on: four blocks of primary school classrooms, a borehole for water, a water reservoir, rebuilding a water tower, two palm oil presses, an oven to dry fish, three animal fattening projects, construction of an anti-saline dyke, funds for a school lunch program, and financial aid for returning refugees, among other causes.

Some kinds of microprojects work better than others. Raising animals in pens seems to run counter to habits of free-range management, and was not a money maker. Some gardens were heavily attacked by insects, and some village shops in small communities had trouble functioning effectively. In most of these cases, corrective action was taken. Few pests attack onions, for example, which also store and transport well; and small-market shops have adjusted their hours and inventory.

Only one microproject in 100 communities was abandoned due to internal disorganization. As one elder commented when asked about his community's commitment to manage a new health hut: *we have waited so many years for this service; do you really think we will not take care of it?*

All of the ten communities visited for this study have made plans for follow-on development activities. All seemed to understand that this was a one-time grant, seed money to help them get re-started. Especially heartening was how often people spoke of the inter-village benefits of their mill, shop or health hut, and how these installations have brought them together again, by providing a place for people to discuss common issues and re-affirm bonds that were obscured by fear and isolation during the conflict.



*The youth of Casamance are acutely aware of the price their generation will pay in lost opportunities if peace is not finalized soon. This group in Kabrousse works for peace in their community, with a borrowed blackboard.*

### **Results of political peacebuilding**

The project objectives speak of putting in place structures for conflict mitigation. While this refers mainly to village and inter-village activities, the project team made an impact at a much higher level.

Track one diplomacy is an area of peacebuilding that works with great discretion and finesse on finding and expanding the politically acceptable boundaries of a peaceful settlement and expressing them in a legal framework. It may be simultaneously highly visible and deeply secret in content. For all these reasons, political peacebuilding is rarely the domain of development-oriented NGOs. Yet, *Building Peace and Prosperity* participated actively at this level in two ways.

**The public debut of MFDC.** The act of bringing MFDC leaders to the Cultural Weekends and other events as part of the discourse of peacebuilding produced electrifying results – every bit the silence-breaking impact it was meant to have. If MFDC leaders could clasp hands with their sworn enemy in Senegalese military uniform, then maybe this tired talk of peace finally meant something.

It was a huge risk for all concerned, and could have backfired badly. But WE project staff members had prepared meticulously for the event with transparency and evenhandedness. They were duly rewarded and the project ascended to the forefront of the peace process.

**Advisor to MFDC.** In retrospect it may look like a logical progression for WE's Program Director to continue contributing to political peacebuilding. After all, MFDC leaders knew they needed more diplomatic skills, plus logistic support and timely assistance with transport and communications. Why not go to the one source that could offer this range of services, and whose discretion and neutrality were proven?

Abdou Sarr and his project team had no doubt they could advance peace through organizational support to the MFDC, given the chance. They first secured Senegalese government agreement and then approached WE headquarters in Boston. WE agreed, with the caveat that project staff not be put in harm's way. USAID's Casamance sub-office had to know some of what was going on. After all, Ziguinchor is a small city and WE was a grantee. It is not clear how much USAID Senegal officials in Dakar knew, or wanted to know, of this activity.

*"Do you think that we can make lasting changes in our villages without an agreement between us? I don't think so and no one can make this change happen for us. So we are here today – in this open forum to talk about our differences and try to work them out."*

King of Kabrousse, speaking at the Cultural Weekend in Kabrousse

Later Sarr's role was splashed across national television and print media at a dramatic meeting between l'Abbé Diamacoune and President Wade in May 2003. USAID wrote a carefully worded letter to WE about the need to make its peacebuilding resources available to all parties as it maintains neutrality -- a tacit acceptance of the unique role Sarr was playing.

No one understood the need for neutrality better than Sarr. This was especially true among the competing factions of MFDC. The Dakar government came to be a great supporter of WE's assistance to MFDC, as infighting among rebels decreased, and talk of independence was replaced by less strident demands.

Sarr never spoke *for* the MFDC, or even took a mediator's role between MFDC and the government, preferring to stay in the background. Yet his faultless impartiality, unending availability, absolute discretion and genuine humility have significantly advanced the complex peace process in a way no other actor has been able to do.



*Some of the officials who were present at the historic meeting of Senegal's top government officials and leaders of the political arm of the MFDC at the presidential palace in Dakar on 3 May 2003. Along with the Ministers and CCC leaders are members of the MFDC delegation. President Wade in a gray suit is flanked by MFDC President I'Abbé Augustin Daimacoune and his brother, Bertrand Daimacoune, whose hands he holds. To Bertrand's left is WE's Abdou Sarr.*

*In a preliminary meeting earlier that day in Dakar, the MFDC had presented their list of ten demands, notably lacking direct reference to independence for the Casamance. It was conveyed to President Wade, who agreed to all ten, and then had the MFDC delegation ushered in for talks.*

*With an agreement in principle, the President suggested that the nation be allowed to attend as well. Television viewers around Senegal watched in amazement as leaders of MFDC spoke in real time of developing their neglected region within a unified Senegal nation. It was not the end of the peace process by any stretch, but it was an unforgettable milestone in the decades-long struggle in the Casamance.*

## **F. That's fine in practice, but will it work in theory?**

When new academic concepts arise in development studies, one often hears the remark: that's fine in theory, but will it work in practice? In *Building for Peace and Prosperity* the query is reversed. How does this apparently successful project fit within existing theoretical frameworks?

This study was charged with correlating the design and implementation of the WE project with the theory of peacebuilding. Earlier in the paper are explanations

for various aspects of peacebuilding. Here we would like to take a closer look at *conflict transformation* theory, which is the essence of peacebuilding. Whether by design or circumstance, much of World Education’s project can be understood in this theoretical framework. Let’s look at some of the basic tenants of this framework and see how *Building for Peace and Prosperity* matches up.

### **Conflict Transformation**

**Some definitions.** Conflict Transformation is defined as the process by which people change situations, relationships or structures so that they become less violent, less conflict-ridden and less unjust.

By focusing on the process by which conflict develops into violence it addresses the root causes of violent conflict in order to prevent their emergence or resurgence. It includes, but is not limited to, conflict prevention and conflict resolution, which are more specific and limited.

Conflict resolution asks: How do we end something we don’t desire? In conflict transformation the guiding question is: How do we end something not desired *and* build something we do desire? Transformation goes beyond negotiating solutions or ending the fighting, and builds towards a new status. Transformation promotes constructive change inclusive of, but not limited to, immediate crisis-driven solutions. Transformation is about communities moving beyond the present state, and changing their lives for the better.

*“All parties to conflicts (no matter how powerful/powerless, official or unofficial they are) have a right to be involved in the solutions of their own problems. If they are excluded, there is a strong probability that whatever settlement/solutions might be reached will fail, thereby forcing the imposition of their partial settlements/solutions which will prove equally fragile.”*

Kevin Clements

The design of *Building for Peace and Prosperity* follows this principle of combining both work to end current conflicts (and deal better with new conflicts), *and* work to help rebuild disrupted economic and social structures. Peacebuilding via Cultural Weekends and training in non-violent conflict resolution is followed by project management training and funding of community-defined microprojects that make immediate improvement in the lives of participants.

**Inclusion, inclusion, inclusion.** Peace theory tells us that the number one guiding principle in conflict transformation work is to involve those most affected by the conflict. For foreign agents there is a special caution, in light of their access to resources far greater than those of local actors, and the influence this gives them. As Michael Wessels of Christian Children’s Fund notes, “In this situation local knowledge and practice is easily marginalized. Western ‘experts’ may impose their own practices and ways of doing things, which may further silence local people.”

*Building for Peace and Prosperity* honored this principle from the onset, by presenting the project to all players, from the Minister of Armed Forces and factions of MFDC units, to spiritual leaders and community elders, plus many village-level meetings. In planning peacebuilding activities like Cultural Weekends, and inter-village encounters, WE bent over backwards to take in all elements of society, including refugees hoping to return and even the clandestine presence of rebel fighters. All were invited, to hear and be heard.



*An animated discussion like this one is typical of the planning and reporting sessions that take place around the management of community projects. This is part of the women's group that manages the grain grinding mill that has cut hours of tedious labor from women's daily chores. In community after community, the elected village management committees choose a woman's group to run the microprojects -- a testament to their skills and honesty.*

Part of inclusion is a respect for gender and cultural diversity, and ensuring that marginalized elements are brought into the process. WE's project supported the distinctive role of all spiritual leaders in the peacemaking process: Muslim, Christian and Animist. It strengthened women's organizations to take charge of microprojects and contribute to lasting peace in their communities.

**The *elicitive* approach.** Without using this vocabulary, WE's design proposed to use an approach that John Paul Lederach, a leading theorist and practitioner of conflict transformation, calls *elicitive*, as opposed to directive or prescriptive. This approach acknowledges that affected people are the ones best able to analyze their situations and select solutions. The process and results belong to them.

Elicitive methodology emphasizes shared problem solving by group facilitation, consultation and dialogue between outside agents, like *Building for Peace and Prosperity*, and Casamance citizens. The aim is to create a shared community that integrates values and perspectives of both outside and local participants.

In 100 communities, WE's project facilitated an elicitive process. Democratically elected village management committees guided a community planning process,

leading to selection of priority microprojects, which WE then supported. Community ownership was at the heart of this process – owning the decisions and the physical activities that are a result of those decisions.

Partnering with localized associations as intermediaries was key to WE's application of the elicitive approach. By building capacities of these trusted associations and using them as project extension agents, *Building for Peace and Prosperity* assembled a corps of credible facilitators to mentor a community-driven program.

**A messy, complex and natural phenomenon.** Conflict transformation appreciates that conflict, in and of itself, is a natural phenomenon and an agent for dynamic change. While conflict cannot be eliminated from the human experience, humans can alter its direction from violence to generative and positive change. Transformation asks the question: How can we build capacities for a lasting peace and at the same time create response mechanisms for the delivery of service that meets immediate needs?



*The complexities of conflict are well known to these women who fled their village years ago and are still waiting for land mines to be cleared. Meanwhile Building for Peace and Prosperity has helped them to acquire the temporary use of a field, and supplied them with some tools and seeds. They appreciate the hospitality of strangers, but want to go home.*

According to Lederach, one often hears, *This situation is such a mess. It is just too complicated. There are too many things going on to even try and explain it.* The Casamance conflict certainly fits the definition of complexity, with its long history, root causes, ethnic diversity, failed peace initiatives, competing agendas and multiple players: participants, victims, would-be helpers and beneficiaries.

The conflict transformation challenge is to tolerate the ambiguity and uncertainty that accompanies complexity. This in turn allows an open attitude towards modifying or changing the plans. Transformation embraces the complexity of a conflict situation as a requirement for pursuing options that respond to all aspects. The antithesis is being locked into a simplified vision of the situation with a preconceived solution.

WE's project design took in the complexity of the situation, and proposed a complex set of activities that corresponds to the multiple layers of peacebuilding that were required. During implementation WE added to this complexity in response to new opportunities. For example, when conflict-based stress was identified as an important issue, UNICEF's training in this area was added to the community-level interventions.

**Relationships and entanglements.** Conflict transformation is all about relationships and the inter-connectedness of all participants. Rather than envisioning the parties to conflict as autonomous and independent, or identifying neutral outsiders for mediators, it looks at the web of extended relations that holds everyone involved together. To disentangle the knots of conflict one must first acknowledge that all the strands are meant to be woven together in a more useful net of relationships.

The importance of relationships within *Building for Peace and Prosperity* is first evident in the project office where the atmosphere is open, supportive and congenial. MFDC leader, keeper of a sacred forest, village elder, journalist or donor representative: all visitors are treated to the same warm greetings and hospitality by the project staff.

These staff members, beginning with drivers and secretaries, know the importance of trusting relationships and have shown extraordinary discretion in

#### Djirack – once there was a way to get back home ...

The farming and fishing village of Djirack nestles between tidal mangrove inlets and dense forests that extended south into Guinea-Bissau. Mango orchards and plantations of oil palms thrive in the wet climate. A group of women used to tend a big vegetable garden to supply tourists on sandy beaches an hour's ride away. If a fisherman was unlucky with his nets, he could always cut a few lengths of mangrove root packed with oysters for the family dinner.

The sprawling community featured a primary school, four wells, a health dispensary and a maternity. Former residents remember it as a little corner of paradise. Then the village was caught up in the conflict in the early 1990s and everything changed. Residents of Djirack, many second-generation immigrants to the region, refused rebel demands for aid. Houses were burned. People began to flee.

The struggle escalated. In 1996 the village chief was assassinated and many buildings firebombed. The army moved in and battles raged across Djirack. As positions changed, warring factions mined some fields. Then the road to the next town was mined, cutting Djirack off from the rest of the world, except for a high-tide water route through the mangrove channels.

By the early 2000s the battle for Djirack ended, but the village remains a military outpost. Once a flourishing community of 750, only ten hardy men remained to keep watch in Djirack, one of 230 communities that were abandoned during the conflict. The motorized pirogue contributed by the WE project is a rallying point for Djirack's diaspora, and it has allowed a small stream of people to begin to return. Their way back home will be a protracted, complex, expensive and dangerous process.

protecting the integrity of peacebuilding efforts. When a military plane was sent to Ziguinchor to fetch MFDC leaders along with Sarr for the historic meeting with President Wade in Dakar in May 2003, no outsider knew of this event until the delegations appeared on a live television broadcast.

Relationships built on mutual trust and respect can be found at all project levels. Participants feel free to offer criticism about the project. If a boat is leaking or a grinding mill is underpowered, they say so. When Abdou Sarr felt the need for a direct channel to the President, he used his network of collegial relationships to link with CCC, and through that partner, to President Wade.

MFDC leaders stood publicly with government officials for the first time at the project's Cultural Weekends. Now rebel leaders and the administration meet to discuss rebel movements and troop deployments, to avoid unwanted confrontations. WE does not claim credit for that welcome development, but all involved would testify that the project brought the parties together to work on untangling the strands of conflict and re-stringing the ties that bind.

*“One of the most important lessons learned over the past few years is that external organizations do not solve other people’s problems and if they claim they do, they are engaged in a deception. All that external organizations can do is to provide a safe space, or some space, within which the local parties to conflict themselves might begin addressing the sources of their conflict and solving it for themselves.”*

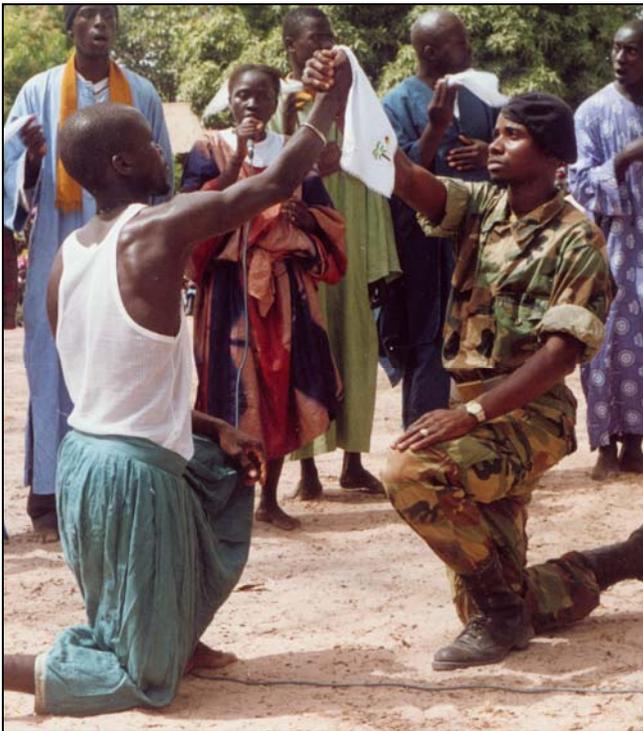
Kevin Clements

**Where is the post in post-conflict?** Conflict transformation theory sees change as circular rather than linear. *Post-conflict* periods will include flare-ups, set backs and disappointments as well as times when the sweet smell of success fills the air. Peacebuilding requires a long-term commitment to the situation, because the work will only deepen and widen on the path to lasting peace. As Hizkias Assefa concluded after mediating among different factions of the Guinea Fowl War in Ghana, *There is no end to this journey. One can only talk about opening a new chapter.*

In April 2004, long after the last major rebel attack, a three-man military team was murdered while de-mining fields not far from Ziguinchor. In May 2004, the MFDC encounter that was meant to solidify the movement around a peace agenda, fell far short. How will Casamance society treat hundreds of returning rebels? What happens when thousands of returning refugees and displaced persons find others have occupied their lands in the years since they fled? How will the MFDC leadership fit into the political landscape once peace accords are signed? Indeed, one can only talk about opening a new chapter in the Casamance, as conflict will continue in various forms.

WE’s project staff understands that the first three years of *Building for Peace and Prosperity* is only a beginning. They are committed to seeing the peace process

through to a signed agreement between the government and the rebel forces, and to continue the unfinished peacebuilding work at all other levels. They envision a more equal relationship with local partners, who are now strengthened to perform more independently. They understand that exclusion of Bignona and resulting unequal distribution of project resources must be remedied in the next phase. They further understand that in their efforts to build lasting peace they must continue to be a coalition builder, ever widening the circle of players.



*A theater troupe at the Cultural Weekends enacts a drama on the conflict. It concerns two brothers who have joined opposite forces, and at long last find themselves returning home to live in peace. A chorus in the background pounds home the theme that is it now time to put aside past differences and make peace work for all.*

**The most challenging aspect: Independence.** In the ten guiding principles of the conduct for conflict transformation put forth by the NGO International Alert, *Building for Peace and Prosperity* appears to correlate well with nine of them. These include: primacy of people, respect for gender and cultural diversity, impartiality, partnerships and confidentiality, among others.

The aspect this project and its financial sponsor found more difficult was *independence*. The challenge is to permit the project to have the necessary degree of independence while it functions within the confines of USAID's program procedures and oversight requirements.

This project's lack of true independence results from being funded through a cooperative agreement, a type of grant that allows USAID to retain substantial involvement in project implementation. *Building for Peace and Prosperity* did have considerable freedom of action within the agreed-upon work plan. However, USAID imposed a number of conditions, starting with the replacement of Bignona with Kolda in the project zone of operation. It also required prior approval for every microproject grant, obliging WE to present 150 separate proposals. USAID officials also questioned the use of these tiny grants for certain kinds of peacebuilding efforts, eventually agreeing in most cases.

On the positive side, this high level of donor involvement extended to official US government presence at Cultural Weekends and other project events such as the official launching of the fleet of pirogues. Both the USAID Director and the

American Ambassador in Senegal visited the project. USAID is appreciated in the Casamance as one of the few external donors who did not abandon the region during the conflict. In the Casamance, WE's funding from USAID is seen as a mark of support from that US-based NGO's home government. Also, USAID did give tacit approval to WE's political peacebuilding, an unplanned activity.



*A visit to the community store of Kamboua village in Kolda Department. Although it only opens for a few hours morning and night, the shop does a brisk business. Big sellers include rice, cooking oil, sugar, salt and kerosene. The elected village management committee decided to form a group of seven, shown here. They were all trained in shop management, and make purchasing decisions together. A single shop worker is paid according to the shop's income. Because the shop is both a business and a service, the mark-up is minimal -- \$0.05 on a kilogram of rice. Still they have earned \$455 in the seven months of operation, and are thinking of new community projects to fund. Women especially like the shop as it saves them long walks to buy basic items. Villagers note that this little boutique brings in people from miles around, who stop and talk and exchange ideas before heading home.*

Unfortunately, WE has not been able to secure a commitment from USAID for continued funding of *Building for Peace and Prosperity* after the current project ends in mid-2004, despite several requests and expressions of USAID interest. WE has few funding options. Other international donors seem unlikely to return until peace accords are signed, which could be months or years away.

Perhaps no nonprofit agency is ever completely independent in its work on conflict transformation. Funding through a cooperative agreement, especially under close management by USAID, can restrict the flexibility needed for conflict transformation work.

## **G. Lessons to be learned**

It is time to pull together the lessons from the rich experience of *Building for Peace and Prosperity*. Some of these will no doubt sound like little more than codified common sense: include all parties; partnerships take time and

commitment; build on what is already in place; strengthen local capacities for lasting impact; do not stop until the job is completed; and be home before dark. Common sense or not, they are often ignored or applied poorly, and so merit repetition.

Let's see how these common sense lessons play out in this project. The three types of peacebuilding, social, structural and political, again provide the framework. An additional section addresses lessons in overall project design and management. In each section a series of short lessons are cited, followed by a weightier question.

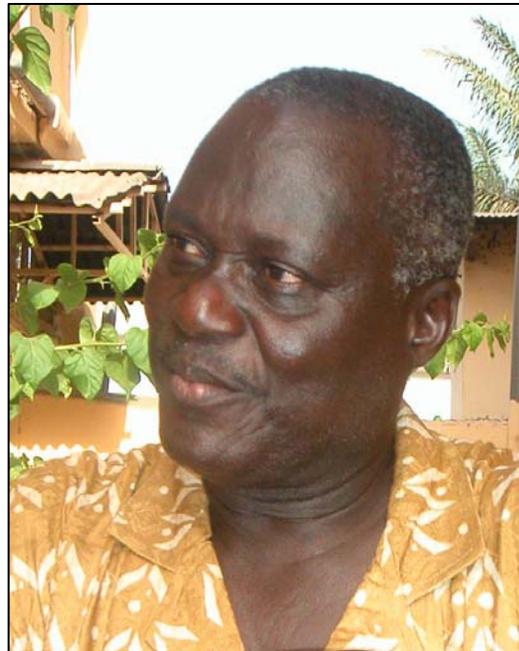


*Line dancing at one of the Cultural Weekends – a chance to celebrate the coming peace and to reconnect regionally.*

### **Lessons in social peacebuilding**

In this three-tiered peacebuilding paradigm, the social layer encompasses all that is done to aid recovery from the psycho-social impact of conflict, through training, dialogue processes, and community re-building activities. Lessons in this area include:

- Localized intermediary partners were a necessity in this project. Their participation provided WE with knowledge, access and credibility at the community level.
- No other technique could have reached over 100 villages with this breadth of interventions. WE's relationship with these intermediary agencies was truly symbiotic.



*The faces of partnership. Salimatou Sabaly of OFAD and Mamadou Sylla of AJAEDO play important roles in the implementation of Building for Peace and Prosperity. Mother of three, Salimatou is an Animatrice – trainer and monitor of village level project activities. Sylla came out of retirement after a long career in community development to coordinate the work of the Animateurs in the Oussouye area. Their translations from Pulaar and Diola to French, and tireless explanations of all things Casamançais, added greatly to the case study team's understanding.*

- The process of institutional diagnosis and capacity building took a lot of time and work, but paid off handsomely. OFAD, AJEADO and the others made quantum leaps in their structural development and program competence – progress that will allow them to serve their constituents better for many years to come.
- Associations like OFAD tend to form around dynamic individuals whose personalized management style eventually may be a block to change. Reorganization requires them to let go of old patterns so others can share the burdens of leadership and improve overall capacities. This is hard, but in the cases faced during this project it seems to have succeeded.
- Cultural Weekends worked well because all kinds of leaders and all elements of society were included, and interventions were based on cultural practices.
- Having MFDC share the speakers' platform with military and other leaders was a calculated risk that changed the face of the conflict for thousands of people. Transparent planning and detailed preparation served to mitigate the risk.
- Cultural Weekends and small grants for other peacebuilding efforts gave opportunities to spiritual and community leaders to use their competence and authority to promote peace.
- A by-product of the involvement of these leaders is a validation of their stature and a reinforcement of their peacebuilding roles.
- Human rights training, with its process of defining rights and action planning to ensure them, carried the momentum of the Cultural Weekends into

people's daily lives and helped make abstract talk of peacebuilding a practical and personal reality.

- Stress management training, with its emphasis on training trainers to work with trauma survivors, is another way that communities gain a better understanding of how any form of violence hurts its members and how victims can be helped to heal those psychological wounds.
- Detailed assessment of the impact of such training has not been done; yet people believe it has made them better equipped to deal with the past and to face the coming conflicts such as refugee and ex-combatant resettlement.

**Excessive use of foreign resources?** A few organizations seeking to do peace work have complained that WE's project has used its resources and provided funding for activities in ways that local agencies cannot match. For example, some food was provided for those attending the Cultural Weekends, and WE vehicles are used to ferry local leaders to and from project events. Also, the microproject fund is a unique resource for fostering community participation.

The question to ask is whether the funds were appropriate to the task. The project spent about \$5000 per Cultural Weekend, each of which brought together an estimated 3000 people for two days. It seems inevitable that, having invited them to such an event, WE needed to take some responsibility for their welfare. Food and music and prizes for competition winners was part of the peacebuilding experience. Likewise, the microproject fund is an integral part of the project's design, linking psycho-social and economic aspects of rebuilding communities.

There is no easy answer to the disparity of resources between agencies that are working in the same field. Yet, to see peacebuilding as a competitive activity or a zero-sum fundraising competition is misguided. WE has consistently used its project resources to uplift local leaders and advance its local partners. If anything, WE could use *more* funding at this point, as could other peacebuilding efforts of local and international NGOs in the Casamance.

### **Lessons in structural peacebuilding**

This layer of peacebuilding concerns the rebuilding of social and economic infrastructure for a return to peaceful development. *Building for Peace and Prosperity* focused on community planning, selection and funding of microprojects, and their implementation and offered ongoing support through monitoring. Some of the lessons are:

- Village management committees needed guidance to grow beyond the usual patriarchal gerontocracy model, to include women and youth in leadership.
- Allowing communities to make their own decision on microprojects and management of these projects were essential steps for ownership and self-directed development.
- Community choice is key, but it still requires tactful technical guidance and advice, as villagers may not be aware of all the ramifications of their choices.

- Existing women's groups were often their community's choice for day-to-day management of microprojects, thus requiring another round of training. The extra effort was well worth the investment to empower these women.
- The main preoccupation for communities in terms of microproject investment is health through health huts, and also gardens which are seen as helping improve household nutrition. Over one-half of the microprojects are related to health.
- The microproject budget was far too small in the original project budget and still not large enough at twice that level. Far more microprojects could have been funded using the project's grant management and monitoring system.
- For many villagers, the microprojects are the most useful aspect of the entire project.

Competence was transferred, confidence gained and a vital service initiated. Many communities have moved on to launch new self-funded activities, building on their microprojects. Almost all have plans to do so.

**Key finding:**

*Democratic decision-making and transparent management take lots of practice and reinforcement. Now communities have come to expect transparent financial accounts and to receive public reports of their small businesses or social services. This is a minor revolution that needs to be supported over time.*

**Handout versus reimbursement?** Some NGOs and other observers have questioned whether WE's project should be making loans rather than grants for microprojects. While the repayment argument has a certain logic, i.e., to avoid dependency, the logic in favor of a start-up grant for community activities in this conflict-affected situation is also strong.

Communities contribute at least 25%, and often a good bit more, of the total cost of their microprojects. Almost all of the microprojects are successful, in that they are meeting recurrent costs and serving their intended purpose. For the more expensive microprojects, like motorized pirogues, communities could not be expected to repay the full investment. All of them generate income to maintain equipment and provide funds for new community projects. That expansion of economic activities and social services by the communities, and the confidence it generates, is far more useful than returning the initial capital to the project.

Resource-depleted communities feared that they would be unable to repay even small loans, a particularly sensitive issue in Diola culture. Now that they have generated some capital, many groups are now ready to accept loans, knowing that they will be able to repay them.

**Lessons in political peacebuilding**

This highest level of peacebuilding was not a visible element of the original proposal, for a good reason. No one could have forecast the opportunity that presented itself for WE project staff to provide direct assistance to MFDC.

- The decision to take calculated risks involves both project staff and World Education. WE headquarters in Boston knew in a general way that Abdou Sarr was helping MFDC to present more moderate positions and to reconcile its internal factions. This freedom of action is in keeping with the decentralized management structure of WE, which allows and encourages autonomy of field offices.



*At the Presidential palace, at the historic meeting in May 2003, l'Abbé Diamacoune and President Wade enjoy a private moment.*

- Abdou Sarr took care to remain impartial. He did not step into the role of mediator, between MFDC and the government, or among MFDC's factions. Even as an advisor to MFDC, all players knew that he had not taken sides in the negotiations.
- Sarr did much of the work of political peacebuilding, but the entire WE project team was part of the process. This work took a lot of his time, leaving the others to manage with less of his leadership in other areas of this complex program. One cannot take up track one diplomacy without stepping back from other duties.
- WE carried its pattern of partnerships into the area of political peacebuilding, forging an alliance with CCC in order to have access to the President and gaining the legitimizing involvement of these Casamançais professionals. It has been a mutually useful relationship.
- Such partnerships are absolutely critical for track one diplomacy. No single agency, however experienced and well positioned, could have all the connections and all the smarts to do this work on its own.
- On the other hand, political peacebuilding must be done with a level of discretion that excludes the involvement of many players. There is a time for seeking advice and building consensus, and a time when one actor must work alone for the common good.
- While actual peace accords may be some time away, considering the need to first consolidate MFDC, all parties agree that Abdou Sarr's presence has been essential, and that his departure would be a great loss to the peace process.

- Having started this work, and involved itself so deeply, WE is obliged to continue its participation, at least until agreements are signed. For an NGO dependent on relatively short grants, continuing the work will present a challenge.

**Is it appropriate for staff of an external NGO to engage in track one diplomacy?** This question comes up frequently when discussing *Building for Peace and Prosperity*. First of all, it should be said that a number of international NGOs, such as the Carter Center, specialize in high-level peacebuilding. The issue here concerns the involvement of a development-oriented NGO, like World Education.

Doing diplomacy from a position within a development NGO has disadvantages, such as the insecurity of continued funding and the level of donor involvement.

The allegation that this kind of activity by WE amounts to foreign meddling in Senegal's internal affairs is answered by the express approval the government gave for WE's role. Also, it misses the point that Sarr did not undertake direct mediation, but simply advised MFDC. Still, on principle many people question NGO involvement in this high-level role.

Perhaps the question has to be answered on a case-by-case basis. In this situation, WE's other peacebuilding activities led MFDC to trust it and believe it could be useful. WE's transport and communications resources were important. Yet it was Sarr's diplomatic and organizational skills that MFDC asked for and needed in the peace process.

Abdou Sarr is good at this work, and successful at it, because of his personal competence, not because he manages *Building for Peace and Prosperity*. He was the right person with the right skills in the right place at the right time. Who employs him is not as important as whether he is acceptable to the parties concerned for the role he plays. In this light, doing diplomatic work from the base of a major peacebuilding project does not seem so strange. However, this is not something that NGOs can intentionally replicate, as it only came about because of circumstances unique to this project.

**Key finding:**

*Abdou Sarr's involvement in the affairs of MFDC was based on transparency, honesty, respect for all players, neutrality and a deep understanding of the conflict. These are keys to the success of any political peacebuilding process.*

## Lessons in project design and management

Some issues did not fit into the peacebuilding areas above. Here is a brief look at broader lessons, first in design and then in management.

- The overall project design was a model of integrated conflict transformation. It fits well within the best thinking in this field, even if its designers were not consciously aware of this theory.
- The design would have worked well without the addition of political peacebuilding, an aspect of the project that is unknown or unimportant to most rural people in the project zone.
- Intimate knowledge of the Casamance by the design team proved invaluable.
- Making optimum use of available national capacity of service providers like ACA was an excellent strategy. It not only allowed WE to concentrate on things it does best, but it also demonstrated WE's commitment to bring national agencies into its program and expand their competence.
- Lessons in the area of partnership include the need to negotiate unambiguous contracts with partners, get everyone on board with a single vision of the work, and when necessary, move swiftly to address problems as soon as they are identified.
- The same goes for all project staff, in terms of clear job descriptions, frank performance evaluations and corrective actions when indicated.
- NGO work is quite different from the typical 9-to-5 desk jobs in civil service. Not everyone can make the transition to work late hours and weekends, wherever needed on whatever needs doing, as multi-layered peacebuilding requires.
- Personnel are among the hardest issues to handle in any organizational setting. Added complexity comes from multiple partners with their own

### René's Story, part II: rehabilitation

René struggled after being released from jail in 1999. He could not get his old job back at the Club Med, and new work was hard to find. He was continually angry about the secret denunciation that had cost him over four years of his life in preventive detention. He thought about the judge who had locked him up without a trial.

Looking for any kind of work, René applied for a job with a local association based in Oussouye named AJAEDO. It was a position as an *animateur*, working with community groups in a new project run by an American NGO called World Education.

René got the job, got some on-the-job training, and found that development work suits him very well. He visits a series of communities regularly to see how their little businesses are going and help with management issues that come up. Some are grinding mills; others are transport boats owned by island communities. He is proud that the groups he supports are doing so well.

At first after his release, René wanted nothing to do with politics, as he suspected that his earlier outspoken involvement with the opposition party might have contributed to his detention. But he has leadership qualities and was soon in the thick of a youth group that is working on peace issues in his home town of Kabrousse.

Recently René was elected president of the five-community *Communauté Rurale* of Kabrousse and surrounding villages, where he is known for his commitment to peace and development. He still is angry about his wasted years in jail, and wants to make sure no one ever has to suffer such a fate again.

personnel issues and from the relationship between a field office and headquarters. In this setting, human resource issues are inevitable.

- Personnel challenges occurred at all levels in this project, from autocratic leaders on village committees to one-man management teams in local partners. WE senior project staff were changed mid-project. Also, WE headquarters personnel changes in the past year affected support to the project and efforts for renewed fundraising.
- The lesson in all these cases is to deal with personnel issues as forthrightly as possible, and ensure that the program is not adversely affected in the process.



*This is the next generation of Casamançais. Will theirs be a world of peace and development?*

### **Does this project represent a model that can be replicated elsewhere?**

Whether or not one considers this project to be a model, its general framework would seem applicable in a variety of settings where populations are recovering from the affects of conflict. Every situation is different, so design specifics must be modified to fit the circumstances.

While the World Education project demonstrates that NGO involvement in political peacebuilding can be successful, this specialized work does not come naturally to development-oriented NGOs. In general, they do not have the diplomatic skills, the necessary training, or the political muscle to make an impact at this level. This project is an exception.

Concerning social and structural peacebuilding, WE was fortunate to have the fine services of ACA for management training, and the availability of a series of localized associations whose capacities could be developed to serve as project agents and monitors. Also, the Casamance has a rich associative life for the project to build on, which helps explain the high rate of microproject success.

In another situation, WE project staff might have to assume more training or monitoring tasks, and village-level projects would be organized differently. Likewise, opportunities for reinforcing local peacebuilders are different in each cultural setting. The trick is to understand and respect cultural forces and leadership, and include them in the peacebuilding process.

Worth taking along on any project design mission are elements of building local capacities, partnerships, inclusion of all parties, responding to communities' self-defined needs with microprojects, subgrant management, and a deep understanding of the circumstances of the conflict at hand. What cannot be put into a design document are the human qualities of the project team that contributed so much to the success of *Building for Peace and Prosperity in the Casamance*.

### **Conclusion**

Stepping back from the specifics of this fascinating project, one can see the outline of several larger lessons. The old familiar pigeon holes of development, relief, post-conflict, and relief-to-development cannot stand up to the realities of the situation on the ground. We must shift both mindset and program design to accommodate the actual needs of those caught in the complex crossfire of violent conflicts. Sadly, there are dozens of these in Africa and elsewhere.

This new way of thinking begins not with a new set of answers, but a new set of elicitive questions. Sample questions include: do we understand the root causes of this conflict; how can we involve all parties entangled in the problem; how do we use the base of what exists to build peace and prosperity; how can we, as outsiders, assist without prescribing solutions to those who must come up with their own answers; how do we open a safe space for peacebuilding on all levels?

To this particular moment in the Casamance conflict, World Education brought institutional habits of partnership, inclusion, and responding to the expressed needs of the population. Added to these WE design habits was the project team's proclivity for deep listening, empathetic responses and humility. Conflict transformation requires all of the above, as this project demonstrates.

## **Annex 1: Persons contacted and schedule of meetings**

11 April Flight: Dakar from Paris

12 April (national holiday) meetings in Dakar

Susan Gannon, Independent Consultant

Lillian Baer, Co-Director ACI

Sonja Fagerberg Diallo, Director, ARED

13 April Meeting, Dakar ACI Office

George Lopez, Secretary General, Collectif des Cadres Casamançais

Gary Engelberg, Co-Director ACI

Meeting at the ACA office Dakar

M. Yote

Osmane Seck

Meeting at the new offices of ARED

Sonja Fagerberg Diallo, Director

14 April flew from Dakar to Ziguinchor

Meetings in Ziguinchor

Orientation meeting with Alyssa Karp, WE project Director of Administration and Finance

Introduced to support staff, World Education Office

Meeting with Abdou Sarr, Country Director/Program Director, World Education

Meeting with the Governor of Ziguinchor at the Governor's office

15 April meetings in Ziguinchor

Meeting with Abbé Augustin Diamacoune Senghor, President MFDC in Abbé's residence

Meeting with Bertrand Diamacoune Senghor, Former National Delegate MFDC in the WE office

Meeting with Eugène Da, Coordinator of the Microprojects in the WE office

Meeting with project staff of AJAC/LUKAAL, WE local partner at the AJAC office

Landing Badji, Aloiu Djiba, Ismaila Sane, Boubacar Sylla

16 April Travel by road to Oussouye

Meeting with Mamadou Sylla, resource person/translator from AJAEDO, local partner to WE project, Department of Oussouye, in the AJAEDO office

Meeting with Sibiloumbaye Diedhiou, King of Oussouye, Atabo Diatta, *féticheur*, Dialygyheye Diedhiou, *conseiller*, François Diedhiou, translator, in the sacred forest

Meeting with the committee of women for the decorticator microproject, in Edioungou, Department of Oussouye, under the trees next to the grinding mill

Lunch meeting with the staff AJAEDO, in the AJAEDO office  
Meeting with Helénè, Queen of Essaout, Efrem Sambu, plus village chief, Jerry Diatta, President of the *Communauté Rurale*, Norbort Sambou, Vice President of the *Communauté Rurale*, other members of the village committee, under the trees near the Queen's residence  
Travel by pirogue to Carabane, arrive at dusk

17 April

Meeting with the Carabane Management Committee of women and village elders for the pirogue microproject, under a small shelter next to the Casamance River

Travel by pirogue and road to Cap Skirring and Kabrousse  
Meeting with the Sous Préfet, René and the Youth group of Kabrousse

18 April Travel by boat and on foot with military escort to Djirack  
Meeting with President of the Community Rural of Santhiaba Manjaques, Village Chief, Djirack and Management Committee of Women of Djirick for the pirogue micro project, under the trees in Djirak

Return by road to Ziguinchor

19 April Travel by road to Kolda

Lunch Meeting with Baba Koita

Meeting with OFAD/NAFOORE-local partner organization to WE project

Baba Koita, Executive Secretary OFAD/NAFOORE

Alpha Koita Program Director for Education

Thierno Ndiaye Program Officer

Salimatou Sabaly Translator/Animatrice

20 April Travel by road to four rural villages

Meeting with the Management Committee of Women and the Village Chief for the grinding mill microproject for Salikégné, under the trees next to the grinding mill.

Meeting with Management Committee of Women for the micro project of a community store (boutique) in Kamboua, under the trees next to the boutique.

Meeting with the Management Committee of Women for the microproject of a market garden in Sare Omar Kossi, in the garden

Lunch meeting with Baba Koita, at his house in Bagadaji

Meeting with the Management Committee of Women for the micro project of a health facility in El Hadj Saliou, outside of the health hut.

21 April Travel by road to Sare Mbandy

Meeting with the staff of GIE Korase outside of the office: Abdoulaye Baldé, President, Mamadou Mballo, Animateur, Amadou Ba

Meeting with the Management Committee and the staff of the health hut of Sare Mbandy

Visited the boutique of Sare Mbandy

Lunch meeting with Baba Koita, at his house in Bagadaji

Return to Ziguinchor by road, arrive at dusk

22 April Meetings in Ziguinchor

Lamine Coly, regional monitoring officer for USAID, at the hotel

Debriefing and work meeting with the WE team, at the WE office

Meeting with Catholic Relief Services: Ameth Diouf, Mamadou Landing Guèye at the CRS office

Meeting with Ibrahima Ka from CONGAD, at the hotel

Meeting with Eugene Da, WE Director of the Microprojects, at the hotel

23 April Meetings in Ziguinchor

Meeting with World Education Team, at the WE office

Meeting with APRAN, at the hotel

Return meeting with the Governor, at the Governor's office

Meeting with Dr. Preira from UNICEF, at the hotel

Meeting with Natalie Manga from WANEP, at the hotel

24 April

Review of Documents WE Office

Meeting with Mamadou Sylla of OFAD

25 April

Review of Documents WE Office

26 April

Final meeting with the WE project team

Travel by plane from Ziguinchor to Dakar

Meeting with Sounka Ndiaye, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, USAID Senegal, at his office

27 April

Meeting with Abdou Sarr, at Lillian Baer's residence

Lunch meeting with Gary Engelberg, Aboubacar Diallo, Susan Gannon and Abdou Sarr, at Lillian Baer's residence

Final meeting with Abdou Sarr

Flight from Dakar to Paris

People consulted in the US

Paula Green, Karuna Center for Peacebuilding, Greenfield, Massachusetts

Olivia Drier, Karuna Center for Peacebuilding, Greenfield Massachusetts

Jane Rosser, World Education, Boston Office

Shirley Burchfield, World Education, Boston Office

Martha Hopewell, World Education, Boston Office  
Jill Harmsworth, World Education, Boston Office  
Alison Haight, World Education, Boston Office

## **Annex 2: Documents consulted and cited**

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2. ACA Diagnostic report of AJAEDO
3. ACA Diagnostic report of OFAD/NAFOORE
4. ACA Diagnostic report of GIE Korase
5. Profile of Sibiloumbaye Diedhiou-King of Oussouye
6. Proposal for the project involving the King of Oussouye
7. Proposal for the Women's Decorticator Microproject in Edioungou
8. Profile of Helène Diedhiou, Queen of D'essaut, Oussouye
9. Proposal for the project involving Helène
10. Proposal for the Women's Pirogue Microproject, Carabane
11. Proposal for Youth Mobilization in Kabrousse
12. Proposal for the Pirogue Project in Djirack
13. OFAD/NAFOORE report
14. Proposal for the Women's Grinding Mill Microproject, Salidegne
15. Proposal for the Boutique, Kamboua
16. Proposal for the Commercial Gardening project, Sare Oumar Kossi
17. Proposal for the Health Hut, El Hadji Saliou
18. Proposal for the Women's Grinding Mill Microproject, Tanaff
19. Chronology of the Microprojects
20. Grid for the Microprojects
21. Journal of the Collectif des Cadres Casamançais
22. Report of the TOT for AJAC on Stress
23. Proposal: Securing a Second Chance/ Youth in the Casamance
24. Proposal for Post Conflict Reconstruction in the Bignona region
25. Proposal: Building for Peace and Prosperity in the Casamance/Revised Technical Proposal in response to Evaluation by USAID/Senegal, 23 April, 2001
26. Proposal: Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of the Casamance
27. Trip report Nancy Devine April/May 2002
28. Trip Report Alison Haight November 2003
29. Quarterly reports 1 through 12 of *Building for Peace and Prosperity*
30. Annual Report 2003 of *Building for Peace and Prosperity*
31. Time Line of events regarding the Peace Process
32. ARED (Associates in Research and Education for Development) with CERFLA, "Strategies pour une Gestion Alternative des Conflits", Dakar, Senegal. 1999.

### **Documents cited in the case study**

1. Assefa, Hiskias, "Coexistence and Reconciliation in the Northern Region of Ghana" Reconciliation, Justice and Coexistence: Theory and Practice.
2. Clements, Kevin P., "Do Terrorists have Human Rights?" Presentation to the Law Society's International Human Rights Committee, Graham Turnbull Essay Competition Award's Ceremony, 2002.

3. Clements, Kevin P., "Towards Conflict Transformation and a Just Peace", Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, Berlin, Germany, 2001.
4. International Alert's Code of Conduct for Conflict Transformation Work, International Alert, London, UK, 1998.
5. Clements, Kevin P., "Peace Building and Conflict Transformation"
6. Lederach, John Paul, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*, Syracuse Studies on Peace and Conflict Resolution, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York, 1995.
7. Lederach, John Paul, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, Good Books, Intercourse, Pennsylvania, 2003.
8. Wessels, Michael and Carlinda Monteiro, "Healing the Wounds of War in Angola" in D. Doland, A. Dawer and J. Louw, Editors, *Addressing Childhood Adversity*, David Philip, Cape Town, 2000.

### **Annex 3: Case study team**

Carrol Otto and Jonathan Otto are international consultants who work both individually and as a team.

Carrol is a clinical psychologist with a special interest in conflict transformation. Among other credentials, she holds a graduate certification in Psycho-Social Foundations of Peacebuilding from the School for International Training (SIT), in collaboration with the Center for Social Policy and Institutional Development. Carrol's work has included programs on psychological issues facing personnel of agencies delivering humanitarian aid in Tanzania's refugee camps, among other activities.

Jonathan is a development worker of 35 years experience, mainly in Africa. He studied non-formal education and holds a MEd from the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. He focuses on strengthening local and national institutions, natural resource management and grants management, among other sectors.

As a team, Carrol and Jonathan have an interest in innovative communications and training. They designed Fundraising Fundamentals and have co-presented this intensive grantsmanship training program for leaders of NGOs, CSOs, donors and universities from 20 countries. They offer the program annually at the Summer Peacebuilding Institute of SIT. The Ottos are founding members of the US-based nonprofit Pamoja Inc. [www.pamoja.net](http://www.pamoja.net).

